

Kansas Achieves National Objective in Breastfeeding Week

Kansas is one of 14 states to achieve the national objective of having 75 percent of mothers initiate breastfeeding of newborns. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the information recently, showing Kansas has exceeded the Healthy People 2010 objective with 76.5 percent of women in the state initiating breastfeeding with newborns.

This is World Breastfeeding Week 2004 and the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) intends to focus this week on educating people worldwide about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is the recommended method for all infants for at least the first 12 months, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

In Kansas, 37.3 percent of mothers continue breastfeeding at six months, while the national average is 14.2 percent. Mothers still breastfeeding at 12 months in Kansas totaled 17.2 percent.



Breast milk provides protection from infections by sharing the mother's immunities with the baby, until the baby has a chance to build up its own immune system. According to the U.S. department of Health & Human Services' Office on Women's Health, breastmilk contains more than 200 infection-fighting agents that cannot be replicated.

Studies show that babies who aren't breastfed exclusively for the first six months are more likely to develop asthma, allergies, and obesity in childhood. They are also more likely to suffer more colds, flu, ear infections, and other respiratory illnesses, and make more visits to the doctor.

While many Americans know that the best form of nutrition for babies is breastmilk, our nation has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the developed world - only 29 percent of mothers breastfeed their babies at six months postpartum. Most expectant mothers in our country start out with the intention to breastfeed, however more than half change their minds in the early postpartum period.

Fears and doubts about breastfeeding, the perceived inconvenience, and practical barriers such as returning to work are certainly contributing factors. Learning more about the added benefits of breastfeeding and the negative consequences associated with not breastfeeding will help expectant and soon-to-be expectant mothers and their partners make informed decisions.

For more information, go to <http://www.waba.org.my/> and www.4woman.gov.